

ABRAHAM S. ACKLEY HOUSE
406 Cooper Street
Camden
Camden County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-985

HABS
NJ
4-CAM,
16-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ABRAHAM S. ACKLEY HOUSE

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LOCATION: 406 Cooper Street, Camden, Camden County,
New Jersey.

USGS Camden, New Jersey-Pennsylvania, 7.5
Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator
Coordinates: 18.489570.4421660

PRESENT OWNER: United States General Services
Administration, Region 3, Ninth and Market
Streets, Philadelphia, PA 19107

PRESENT USE: Vacant. To be demolished in 1991.

SIGNIFICANCE: The Abraham S. Ackley house is a key
structure in the Cooper Street National
Register Historic District. Originally
built by 1850, this three-story brick
rowhouse was substantially remodeled with
Italianate detailing in the late 1860s,
possibly to match the character of a new
house erected immediately to the east.
As a good example of Italianate style
rowhouse architecture, the Ackley house
contributes to the Cooper Street Historic
District's character as a physical
manifestation of Camden's developmental
history.

I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: Original construction completed by 1850, when Abraham S. Ackley is listed in the Camden city directory at this location. The house also appears on Sidney's 1851 atlas of the city (Durang et al. 1850; Sidney 1851).

2. Architect: Unknown.

3. Original and Subsequent Owners: References are to deeds and other documents in the office of the Recorder of Deeds, Camden County Courthouse, Camden, New Jersey

1847 Deed, 5 April 1847, Book D., p. 308. Hugh McCurdy to Abraham S. Ackley.

1861 Foreclosure, 1 January 1861, Book 37, p. 497.

1861 Deed, 6 July 1861, Book 37, p. 499. Charles Wilson, Sheriff of Camden County, to Henry Croskey.

1863 Deed, 15 April 1863, Book 42, p. 72. Henry Croskey to Friend Whitlock.

1888 Deed, 22 September 1888, Book 139, p. 191. Ann Eliza Whitlock to Alfred L. Black, Jr.

1889 Deed, 20 August 1889, Book 146, p. 26. Alfred L. Black, Jr. to Joseph E. Roberts.

1889 Deed, 21 October 1889, Book 147, p. 363. Joseph E. Roberts to Edward Dudley.

1890 Deed, 10 April 1890, Book 151, p. 567. Edward Dudley to Joseph I. Morris.

1912 Deed, 26 September 1912, Book 371, p. 152. Samuel D. Bergen, executor, to Ahab Haines Lippincott, M.D.

1924 Deed, 22 April 1924, Book 562, p. 158. Ahab Haines Lippincott, M.D. to Robert M. Early.

- 1924 Deed, 22 April 1924, Book 152, p. 159. Robert M. Early to Ahab Haines Lippincott.
- 1949 Deed, 16 August 1949, Book 1412, p. 195. Edwin F. Crane, executor, to Dorothy J. Crane.
- 1961 Deed, 15 February 1961, Book 2422, p. 345. Dorothy J. Crane and Edwin F. Crane to 406 Corporation.

4. Builder, Contractor, Suppliers: no information available.

5. Original Plans and Construction: no information available.

6. Alterations and Additions: The original front wall of the house appears to have been replaced, probably during the 1860s (see section on Foundations, below). Sometime after 1926 (but probably during the 1920s) a one-story frame section at the rear of the house was removed and replaced with a three-story masonry addition, containing a kitchen on the second floor. At the same time, a one-story addition was made on the west side (Sanborn 1926, Sanborn 1950). Sometime after 1950, another one-story addition was made at the extreme rear of the house. The interior of the house has been heavily remodeled, with some alterations dating to the 1920s or 1930s, and many others, particularly on the first floor, accomplished in the 1960s or 1970s.

B. Historical Context.

The Cooper Street Historic District covers six blocks along a major thoroughfare extending from the Delaware River through center-city Camden. The district contains residences, offices and commercial buildings representing the development of the city between 1810 and 1937, a period when industry, commerce and agriculture combined to make Camden the economic and urban center of southern New Jersey. One of the city's oldest roads, Cooper Street was first laid out in 1765 as Ferry Road. It originally constituted the terminus of a route which provided access from all of southern New Jersey to Philadelphia via ferry. Renamed when Jacob Cooper laid out the town of Camden in 1773, Cooper Street remained a major thoroughfare as Camden grew and prospered through the 19th century. The six blocks between 2nd and 7th Streets, which constitute the historic district, represent a significant architectural legacy. Represented among its 76 contributing buildings, most of which are

brick rowhouses and offices, are Greek Revival, Italianate, Chateausque and Queen Anne styles from the 19th century, as well as Mission Revival and Art Deco designs from the first decades of the 20th century. To a significant degree, the high quality of the architecture within the district is attributable to Cooper Street's "long tenure of professional tenants", physicians and attorneys who commissioned substantial residences and offices. Many of these were architect-designed and, as a result, the street offers examples of the work of a number of major Philadelphia architects, including Hazelhurst & Huckel, J. Fletcher Street, Hoxie & Button, Bailey & Truscott, and Frank R. Watson.

In 1847 and 1848, Abraham S. Ackley, a lumber merchant in partnership with William B. Cooper, assembled through several purchases a tract of land on the corner of Cooper and Fourth Streets. By 1850, he was listed as residing there, and a dwelling was shown at that location in an 1851 map of Camden (Sidney 1851). In 1861, having failed to pay taxes the previous year, Ackley was forced to sell the house to settle his debts. The purchaser, Henry Croskey of Philadelphia, sold the property to Friend Whitlock in 1863. Whitlock died in 1868, but his widow, Ann Eliza, and son, Henry C. Whitlock (who became an attorney), remained in residence until 1888 (Camden County Courthouse, Vital Statistics Files, Deaths; U.S. Census 1880; Howe 1887-8:612).

In 1868, a three-story Italianate rowhouse was built next to 406 Cooper Street, for Charles A. Carpenter. The architect for the Carpenter house was Stephen Decatur Button, of Philadelphia (Tatman and Moss 1985). The extraordinary similarities between the present facades of the two houses suggest strongly that 406 Cooper was extensively remodeled at about the same time, even unto rebuilding of the entire front wall. The general character of 406 Cooper, despite many subsequent alterations, appears to date from the later 1860s, rather than 1850, and thus is more correctly attributed to the Whitlock family, rather than to Abraham Ackley.

In 1888, Ann Eliza Whitlock sold her Cooper Street residence to Alfred L. Black, Jr., a partner in the Mining Machinery Company and an officer of the United States Funeral Directing Company. He and his partners operated two funeral homes in Camden, on Market and on Federal Streets. Black, however, was unable to meet mortgage payments, and the Cooper Street property was sold, passing through several hand before becoming the residence, in 1890, of Joseph I.

Morris, a partner in the Morris & Mathis shipbuilding company at Cooper's Point in Camden. (Howe 1890-91:536,881).

In 1912, the executor of Morris' estate sold the property at 406 Cooper Street to Ahab Haines Lippincott, a physician, and his wife, Miriam Lee Early Lippincott. Twelve years later, in April, 1924, Lippincott sold the property to Robert M. Early, who the same day deeded it back to Lippincott. Construction of the west addition, as well as the three-story rear addition, probably took place during Lippincott's ownership to accommodate his medical practice.

In 1949, the Cooper Street house passed into the hands of Miriam Lippincott's executor, Edwin F. Crane, and his wife, Dorothy J. Crane. It was conveyed to the 406 Corporation in 1961 and continued to house medical offices until 1990.

II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: The Ackley house is a brick rowhouse in the Italianate style, representative of mid-19th century residential construction in Camden and on Cooper Street. It has been designated a key structure in the Cooper Street Historic District, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

2. Condition of Fabric: The building appears to be structurally sound, and has been occupied until recently. Exterior limestone trim appears eroded, however, with significant loss of detail. The building is scheduled for demolition in 1991.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall Dimensions: The house is three stories high on a raised basement, and is three bays wide across the facade. The front third of the building measures about 18 feet wide and 30 feet deep. The original rear section of the house measures about 14 feet wide and 40 feet deep. The post-1926 rear addition is also 14 feet wide, and about 20 feet deep. The post-1950 rear addition is roughly 15 feet square. The one-story addition on the west measures approximately 16' x 16'. The building shares a party wall with the Charles Carpenter House, 408 Cooper Street, to the east.

2. Foundations: There is a full basement under the original portion of the house, with rubble stone foundation walls. The front foundation wall is faced with white limestone above grade level, and the basement is illuminated by two segmental-arched windows fitted with ornamental iron grilles. There are crawl spaces beneath the two rear and the west additions.

At the northeast corner of the basement are fragments of a former foundation wall that returned behind the existing front wall. This feature suggests that the original front wall of the Ackley house was rebuilt closer to Cooper Street (to line up with 408 Cooper adjacent to the east). This feature also may explain the Italianate character of the existing facade (which is very similar to that of 408 Cooper Street, which was built in 1868) (Oliver & Becica 1989).

3. Walls: The exterior walls of the house are of loadbearing dark red brick masonry, laid in stretcher bond on the facade. The west and south elevations are covered with stucco, obscuring the character of the original fabric.

4. Structural Systems, Framing: Exterior walls are loadbearing brick masonry. Plain sawn 3" x 8" wooden joists exposed at the basement level are likely typical of floor framing throughout the original portion of the house.

5. Porches, stoops, etc.: A small "stoop" of four brick steps, edged with modern metal railings, marks the main entrance to the house.

6. Chimneys: There are two stuccoed chimneys, both on the west side of the house. One is located within the gable-end wall toward the front of the house. The second is placed against the exterior, toward the middle of the west wall.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and Doors. The Ackley house has five exterior doors. The main entrance, on Cooper Street, features a round-arched limestone surround and keystone with acanthus leaf detail. The existing door and sidelights are modern elements. On the west elevation are three entrances. That nearest Cooper Street is covered with sheet metal. Immediately to the south is an entrance formed by a pair of wooden French doors set in a polygonal

bay. This entry, like the metal-clad door, opens onto a low concrete platform. The third door in the west elevation is located in the post-1950 addition at the extreme rear. On the south elevation, at second story level, is a wooden door with covered plate-glass window opening onto the roof of the one-story section.

b. Windows: Window openings on the facade have white limestone sills and segmental-arched limestone heads with small console brackets. These are fitted with 2/2 wooden double-hung sash. Bay windows on the second floor, west elevation, have rectangular openings fitted with 1/1 wooden double-hung sash and covered on the exterior with aluminum panels. Other windows in the west and south elevations are also rectangular, with any trim now obscured beneath the stucco wall coating. Those in the original portion of the building have 4/4 wooden double-hung sash. Those in the post-1926 rear addition have 1/1 double-hung windows with horizontal lights.

8. Roof

a. Shape, covering: The front section of the house is covered by a very shallowly-pitched side-gable roof. All other roof areas are flat.

b. Cornice, eaves: The original cornice is visible only on the main (north) elevation. It is of wood, with applied soffit moldings, simple brackets, and an applied pendant ornamentation between the brackets along the frieze. The cornices on the west and south elevations are completely enclosed in metal sheathing.

c. Dormers, cupolas, etc.: None.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: See sketch floor plans. The front section of the house has a side-hall plan, with two large rooms in double-pile configuration beside a stairhall along the east (party) wall. The middle portion of the plan, on all floors, consists of a single large room, with a series of smaller rooms and a service stair at the rear. The first floor was most recently used as a physician's office. With the exception of the two front rooms, this floor has been heavily remodeled with modern carpeting, wall paneling, suspended acoustical tile ceilings and fluorescent lighting, and

hollow core doors. The second and third floors were most recently used as apartments.

2. Stairways: The main (front) stair is of modern construction, with metal balustrade, between the first and second floors. The original stair, between the second and third floors, features turned wooden balusters and a shaped rail. The service stair at the rear (in the post-1926 addition) features Craftsman-style square newel posts and balusters.

3. Flooring: All rooms on the first floor have modern carpeting. On the second floor, 1 1/2" tongue-in-groove flooring predominates. The floors of the second story front room and the large middle room are edged with parallel dark stained or painted flooring strips that come together in an abstract "Greek fret" pattern at each corner. The room immediately to the rear is finished with 1-foot squares of narrow flooring laid at right angles to one another. The kitchen, at the extreme rear, has a linoleum floor. Rooms on the third story have plain 2 1/4" tongue-in-groove flooring.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings (except primarily in the modernized first floor rooms) are either papered, or are painted over plaster. There are no original ceiling moldings. On the first floor, the room immediately behind the front room has pressed metal ceiling panels, edged with an egg-and-dart cove molding of the same material.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Due to the periodic remodeling of various portions of the house, it is difficult to generalize about these features. Doors which appear to be original have glass knobs and 2, 4 or 6 recessed panels. Doorways on the second and third floors are edged with plainly-molded 19th century stock. The doorways in the first floor front room (presumed to have originally been the main parlor), have 19th century molded surrounds about 6 1/2" wide, with rounded upper corners.

b. Windows: Windows in the first floor front room are trimmed like the doorways in the same room. In addition, they feature molded horizontal panels beneath the sills. Original window trim on the upper floors consists of simply-molded stock elements.

6. Decorative Features and Trim: A small stained-glass window is present in the second floor front bathroom. The only mantelpiece in the house, located in the large middle room on the second floor, is in the Colonial/Federal Revival style, of darkly-stained wood with fluted pilasters and slightly advanced center panel. The hearth is paved with hexagonal brick tiles. A variety of built-in cupboards (first floor front room, the two rear rooms of the second floor) appear to date from the 1920s or 1930s, and feature double-leaf or sliding doors with multiple panes of glass. The cupboards in the kitchen (second floor rear) also serve as room dividers.

7. Hardware: As noted above, door knobs on original doors are of glass. Several doors retain metal box locks.

8. Mechanical Equipment

a. Heating, air conditioning, etc. No original systems remain.

b. Lighting: No original lighting fixtures remain.

c. Plumbing: Bathrooms are located on each floor immediately behind the two front rooms. Another is located toward the rear of the third floor. Both third floor baths have small claw-foot tubs, and a marble "pedestal" sink is present in the second floor bath. The baths on the first floor have modern fixtures.

9. Original furnishings: None.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: The Ackley house is located near the corner of Cooper Street and Fourth Street, and faces north. The site is in center-city Camden. Cooper street in the immediate vicinity of the house is lined with brick- and stone-fronted rowhouses, many converted to commercial use on the first floor. Behind the house, across the alley known as Markley Place, is the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, constructed in 1931. The small area of vacant land immediately west of the house is paved and used for parking.

2. Historic Landscape Design: None. A fragment of ornamental ironwork fencing remains near the northwest corner of the house, near the sidewalk.

3. Outbuildings: None.

III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Baist, G. William

1886 Atlas of the City of Camden, New Jersey. Compiled and published by G. Wm. Baist, Topographical Engineer, Philadelphia.

1902 Baist's Property Atlas of the City of Camden, New Jersey. G. Wm. Baist, surveyor and map publisher, Philadelphia.

Boyd, William H.

1860 Boyd's General Directory of Camden, New Jersey. William H. Boyd, Philadelphia and New York.

Camden County

1847-1961 Deeds. On file at Camden County Courthouse, Camden, New Jersey.

Durang, O., et al.

1850 The Camden and Gloucester Directory for 1850. O. Durant, W. Hindman and H. Curtis, Camden, New Jersey.

Hopkins, G.M.

1877 City Atlas of Camden, New Jersey. G.M.Hopkins, C.E., Philadelphia.

Howe, C.E.

1887 Howe's Camden City and County Directory. Compiled and published by C.E. Howe Co., Philadelphia.

1890 Howe's Camden City Directory. C.E. Howe Co., Philadelphia.

Munn, David (comp.)

[1989] Descriptive, historical and deed information in manuscript form, submitted by the City of Camden, Division of Planning, to Nancy Zerbe, Office of New Jersey Heritage, Trenton, May 25, 1989.

Oliver & Becica, AIA, PA; Short and Ford Architects; Heritage Studies; and Walter H. Sobel FAIA

1989 Report of Design Concepts for the Proposed Federal Courthouse Annex, Camden, New Jersey. Submitted to General Services Administration, Region 3, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Tatman, Sandra L., and Roger W. Moss.

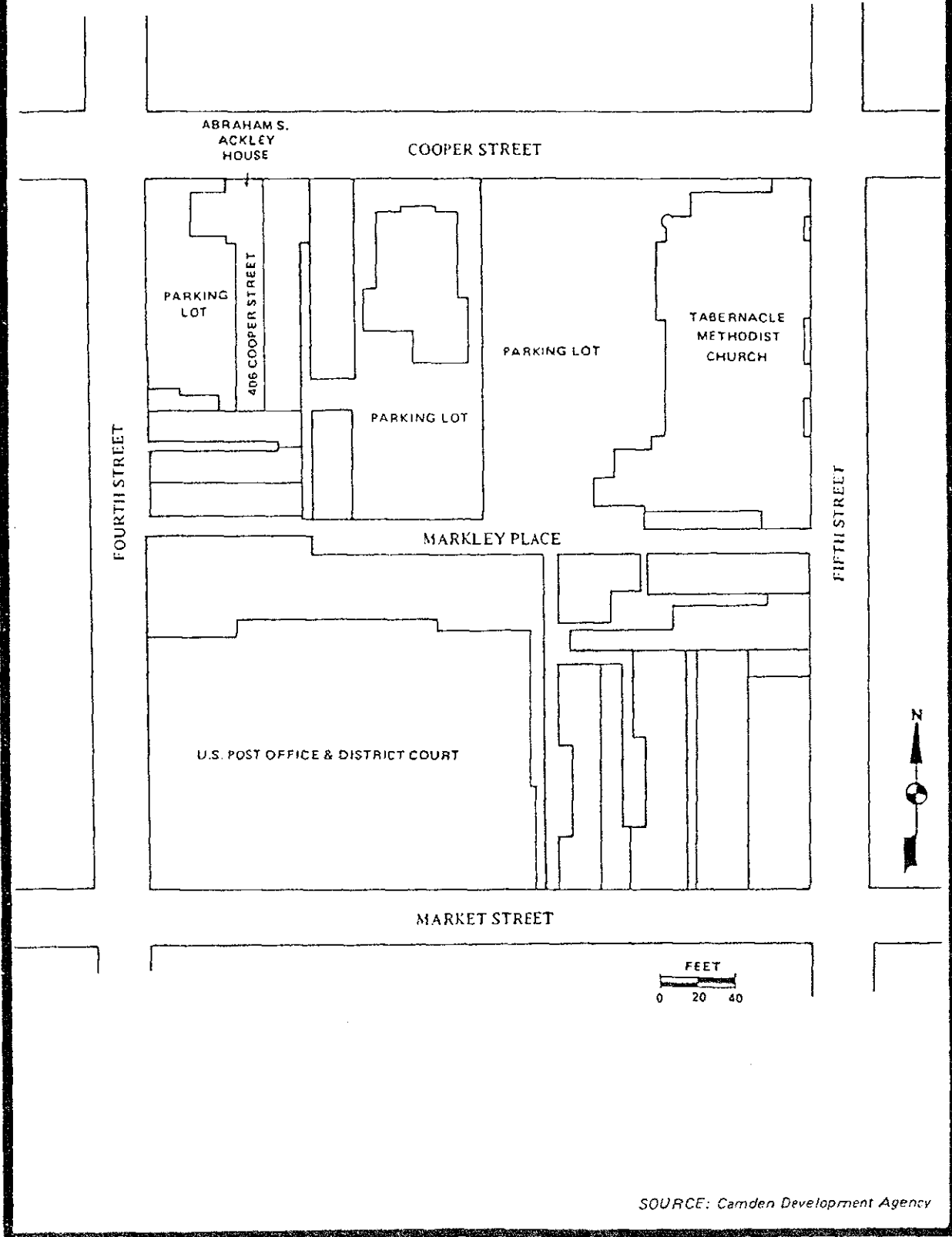
1985 Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects: 1700-1930. Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

United States, Bureau of Census

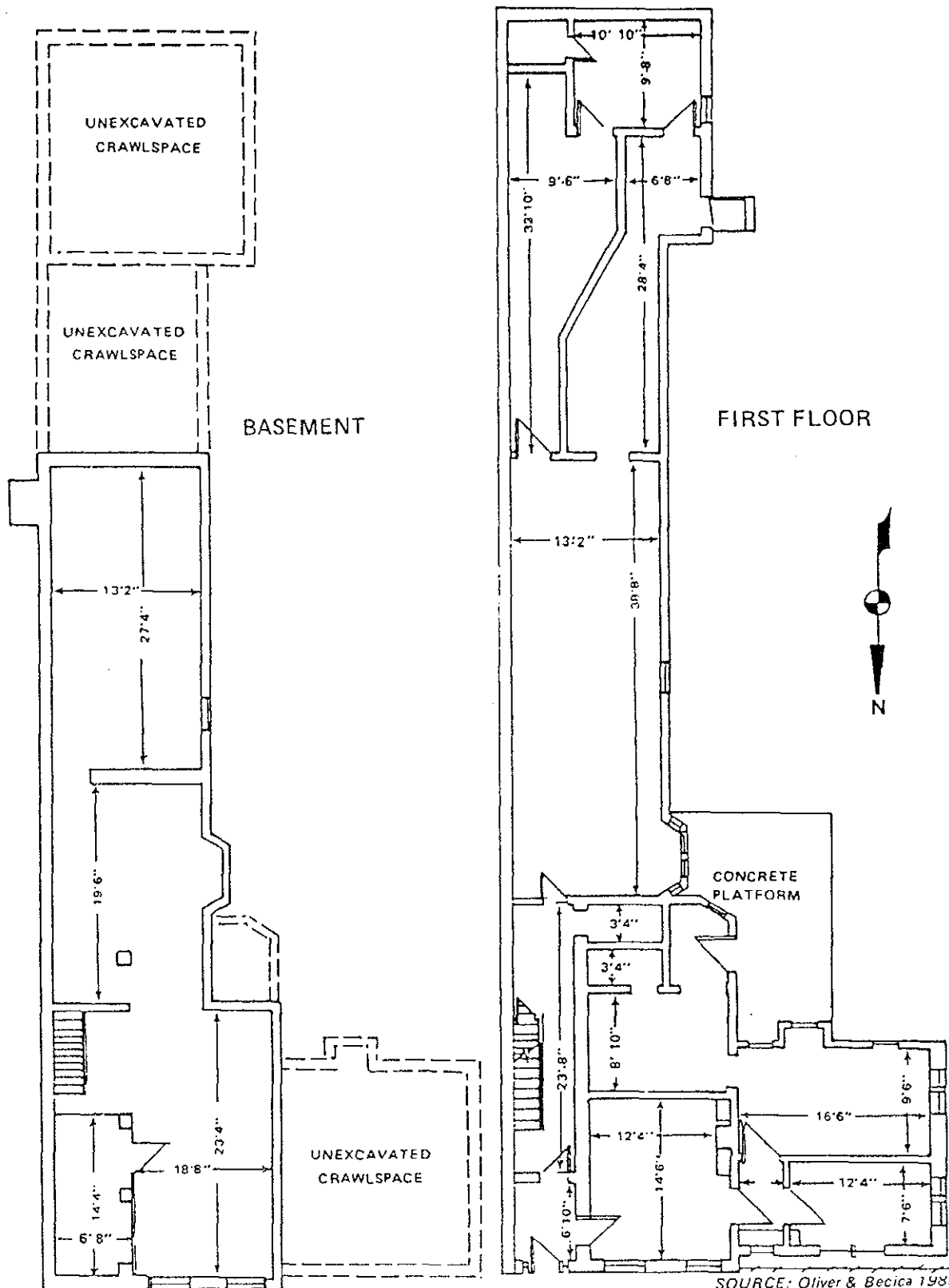
1880 Tenth Census of the United States. Population Schedules. New Jersey, Camden County. Microfilm on file at New Jersey State Archives, Trenton.

IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

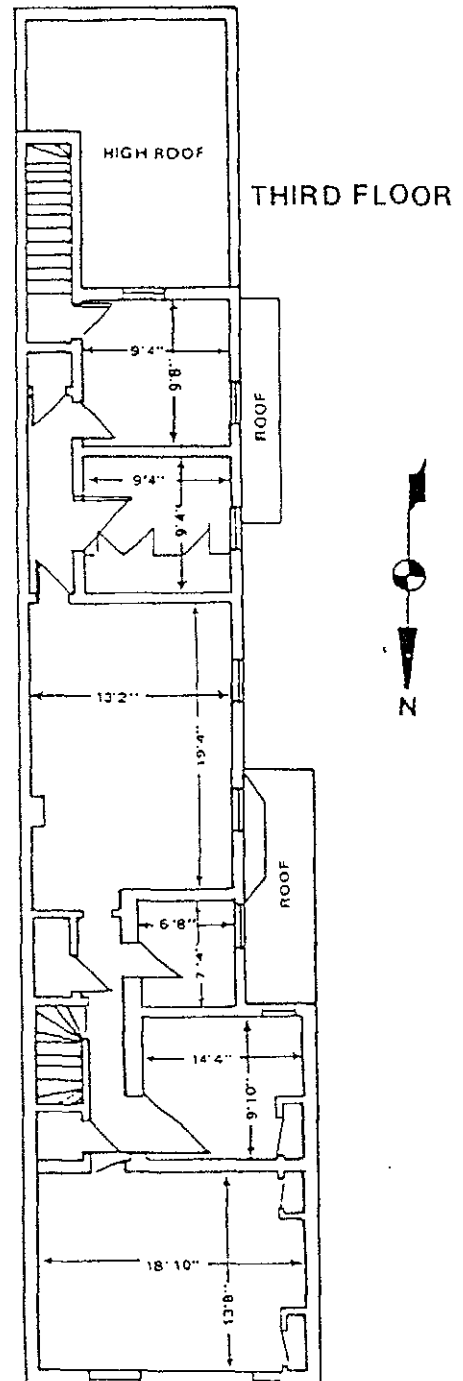
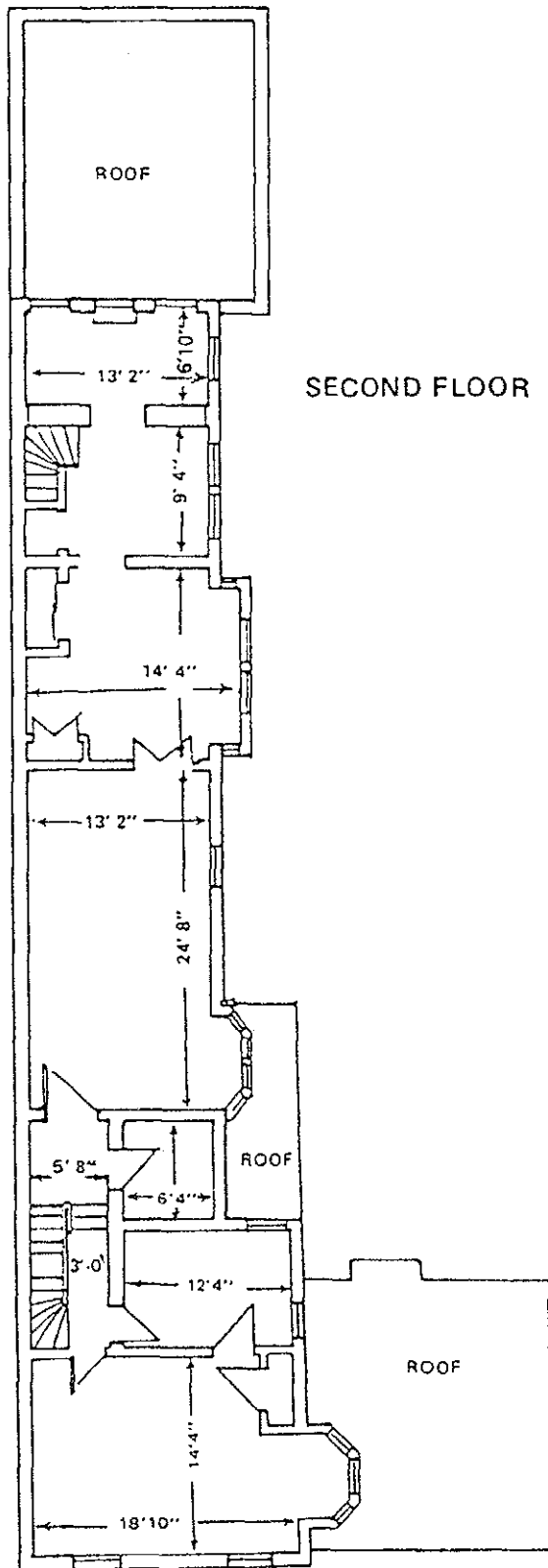
The Abraham S. Ackley House was recorded in November, 1990, by the Cultural Resource Group of Louis Berger & Associates, Inc., East Orange, New Jersey, for Oliver & Becica, A.I.A., P.A., Cherry Hill, New Jersey, and the United States General Services Administration. The building is to be demolished in association with the erection of an annex to the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse in Camden. The project team included Martha H. Bowers, Architectural Historian; Rob Tucher, Photographer; Alison Helms, Historian; and Charles Fiachetti, Field Assistant.

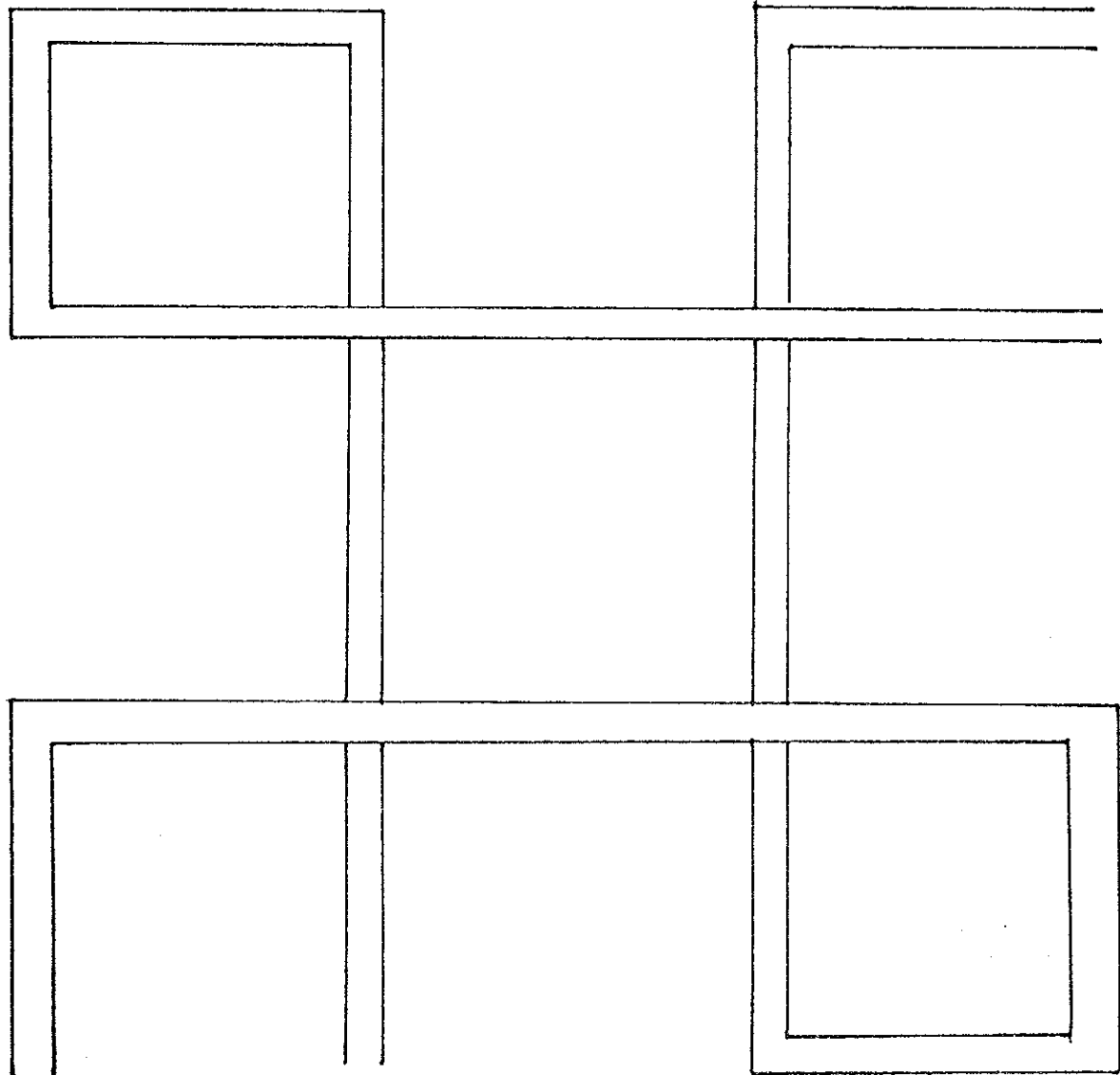


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SOURCE: Oliver & Becica 1989





SKETCH OF FLOORING DETAIL AT CORNERS IN FRONT AND MIDDLE ROOMS ON
SECOND FLOOR.

NO SCALE